

Ways You Said I Love You - With a Shuddering Gasp by **finnxwheeler**

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Summary:

Will has a nightmare. Mike attempts to calm him down. Older!Byeler.

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Author's Note:

This is based on a list of prompts on Tumblr, one of which I received as an anonymous request! I'm not sure where that post is, but I will gladly credit the person who made the post, if they'd like me to!

Also! This is Mike and Will when they're older (in college).

It was a scream that brought Mike Wheeler out of a deep sleep.

He was still caught in that place between sleep and consciousness, but he already knew that it had been his boyfriend, Will Byers, who had screamed. The words "Get away from me!" "Mike!" and No!" floated around Mike, Will's voice slightly muffled as though Mike were underwater. He fought against the waves of sleep in order to fully wake, his eyes snapping open as Will thrashed and yelled in his own slumber. Mike shook him immediately, trying so hard to rouse his boyfriend. Will looked so distressed and in so much pain that Mike could feel his own heart shattering into a million pieces.

"Will?" Mike said, shaking the smaller man's shoulder a bit roughly. "Will?! Wake up! Please!"

With one more hard shake, Will's eyes popped open. He sat up, gasping for breath and coughing slightly between pants. Mike observed him for a moment, his heart beating wildly against his ribcage. Mike was terrified for Will, but he knew that it was nothing compared to what Will was presently going through. Mike didn't have to ask what Will had been dreaming about. The screams, the thrashing, the gasping and the coughing...Mike already knew.

"Will," Mike said softly, extending a hand to lay upon Will's lower arm. The smaller male was damp with sweat, his bare chest and arms slicked with it. There was even a bit on his brow. "Babe?"

Will's large brown eyes were almost feral as they fell on Mike, as if

he didn't even recognize his boyfriend. Will and Mike were currently in their third year of college, and Mike had seen that look as many times as he could count on one hand in the last nine years. Mike curled his lips inward, looking down for a moment as he listened to Will trying to catch his breath.

"Will," Mike said again after a few minutes, glancing back up at the frightened male. "You were screaming, in your sleep. You...You haven't done that in nearly two years."

Will continued to pant, eyes downcast for a moment before flickering to the wall of their apartment bedroom. Tears were leaking from his eyes, his breath hitching as he fought off his sobs. Mike wanted nothing more than to comfort him, but he knew better when Will was in such a state. He wasn't himself when he was like that, and a few times he was even unintentionally violent as Mike attempted to console him. Currently, Will wasn't moving or speaking, and Mike was absolutely worried sick. Will would look like a statue, if it wasn't for the rise and fall of his chest as he took shaky breath after shaky breath.

"Will?" Mike attempted once more. "Baby...I'm...You're scaring me. Please, say something. Anything, I don't care. Move a little bit. Just...God, please..."

Mike then threw his policy of leaving Will alone out the window, wrapping his arms around Will and hugging him tightly from behind. "Will," he murmured in his ear, lovingly kissing his hair and his temple. "Please. Come back to me."

He could feel Will beginning to stir slightly, with Mike gripping him a bit harder before kissing his shoulder. Mike took a deep breath, then began the protocol that Will had once instructed him to do every time he experienced one of his "Upside-Down nightmares," as Will had called them.

"Babe," Mike said slowly. "Do you know where you are right now?"

"Mike," Will gasped. "Mike."

"I'm here," Mike assured. "Willie. I'm right here, my love."

“M-Mike,” Will repeated, turning his head slowly to look at Mike, a distressed whimper passing his lips. “Mike...”

“Babe, tell me where you are at this very moment,” Mike begged gently, tenderly brushing some hair from Will’s eyes. He tried to keep most of the worry from his voice, but had failed miserably. “Please?”

“Apartment,” Will choked out. “I’m in...our apartment. In our bedroom. W-With you, and y-your name is Mike Wh-Whu-Wheeler. No...No Demogorgon or s-slugs or Upside-D-Down?”

The last part was formed as a question, and Mike answered it as such. “No,” he whispered. “No bad stuff. Just you and me, angel face.”

Will was trembling violently, so Mike embraced him even tighter. He turned Will so that his small frame was pressed to Mike’s chest, Will’s eyes teary as he gazed up at Mike. Mike trailed his fingers down Will’s spine, hoping that it might help to calm him a little.

“Slugs,” Will suddenly panted. “U-Upside Down. Trapped. I...I COULDN’T GET OUT, MIKE! I WAS TRAPPED! IT GOT ME! IT. GOT. ME. AGAIN!”

“Will, shh,” Mike soothed. “Will, listen. Look at me. Look.”

Will looked up at Mike, his eyes still feral and his gaze bewildered in the dim moonlight bathing their bedroom. Will’s breath was coming in ragged gasps, grabbing hold of Mike’s arm to know for sure that he was anchored. To know that he was protected.

“You’re safe,” Mike murmured sweetly. “You’re here with me. Nothing can hurt you, I promise. I swear. What happened nine years ago is over. You’re okay. You’re safe, and I’ll never let anyone or anything hurt you. Ever. They would have to kill me first, and you know that I won’t go down easily or without a fight.”

Will whimpered loudly, prompting Mike to squeeze him gently. “D-Don’t...Don’t die, M-Muh-Mikey,” Will managed. “No!”

“Shh, I’m not,” Mike cooed. “I swear.”

Will leaned up then, kissing Mike lovingly and clinging to the taller

male as if his life depended on it when he pulled back. Will's voice was no more than a shuddering gasp as he said: "Mike, I...I love...you. I love you. You...You...I'm so lucky to h-have you. I w-would...I would d-die for you, Mikey."

Mike smiled, leaning in to press his lips to Will's tenderly again. "I love you, too," he said against Will's lips. "Literally, everything about you. God, I...I love you."

"Love you," Will gasped, his eyes beginning to lose their fearful gaze and instead returning somewhat to normal. "L-Love you."

"Will," Mike whispered, pressing a kiss to Will's soft brown hair. "I love you."

Mike brushed his lips against Will's temple, nuzzling the skin there. "I. Love. You."

Mike's lips touched Will's shoulder, a tender "I love you" murmured against his smooth skin. He kissed Will's collarbone, saying a firm "I love you" as he lay Will back on their bed. He pulled Will against his chest again, holding him tightly in his arms. Will was still shaking, his face pressed to Mike's bare shoulder as he continued to fight off tears. Mike began to hum, soon signing "I Melt With You" to help soothe his boyfriend. It seemed to help, for Will's trembling began to subside and his breathing was regulating somewhat. Mike found himself wishing, not for the first time, that he could trade places with Will. He wanted to suffer in Will's place, to experience the nightmares, so that Will would never have to again.

"Mike?" Will croaked, breaking the silence that had fallen between them.

"Yeah, babe?" Mike asked, playing with his boyfriend's hair in an attempt to further calm him.

Will purred, then said: "What would I do without you? I...I can't imagine where I would be if you weren't in my life."

"Well," Mike said, cupping Will's cheek in his hand as he grinned. "Lucky for you, you'll never have to find out. So, you don't have to

imagine it.”

“Good,” Will replied. “Because I would die without you. I know I already said that I’d die for you, but I’d die without you, too.”

“I love you,” Mike gasped shakily as Will hugged him a little too tightly and stole his breath. “Now, get some rest, okay? I’m here. Right here, my beautiful angel. I promise.”

Will grinned, snuggling closer and laying his head over Mike’s heart. The sound of the taller man’s heartbeat was comforting and relaxing, and Will could feel his eyes drooping as he squeezed Mike in another embrace. “Thank you, Mikey.”

“No sweat,” Mike replied. “Sleep, now.”

It didn’t take long for Will to doze off, finally falling into a peaceful slumber. Mike didn’t go back to sleep; in fact, he lay awake and absolutely restless for the remainder of the night. His hope was that, by staying awake and watching over Will, it would be enough to keep the bad dreams at bay. Maybe, just maybe, Mike could deflect all of those horrible images from haunting Will’s sleep by being the one thing Will always believed Mike to be.

His guardian angel.